

Courthouse Centennial Celebrated

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By OCE Public Information Office

While the Federal Judicial Center's Mid-Winter Conference in San Francisco is well known for its educational programs, this year's event was made more memorable with an evening of festivities at the majestic *Beaux Arts* classical style courthouse that has been home to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals since 1905.

The imposing granite-clad landmark at Seventh and Mission streets, recently renamed the James R. Browning U.S. Courthouse in honor of one of the court's longest serving members, was the center of attention on the opening night of the conference as visiting judges and other guests gathered for a special centennial celebration.

The evening included tours led by docents dressed in turn-of-the-century costume; a ceremony dedicating chambers originally intended for the use of a Supreme Court justice while "riding the circuit;" a re-enactment of a 1905 asylum appeal with striking parallels to the present day; and a program on music and the law featuring remarks by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and a performance of chamber music by a quartet that included a lawyer



Justice Sandra Day O'Connor with Chief Judge Mary M. Schroeder and Marc Seltzer of the Ninth Judicial Historical Society



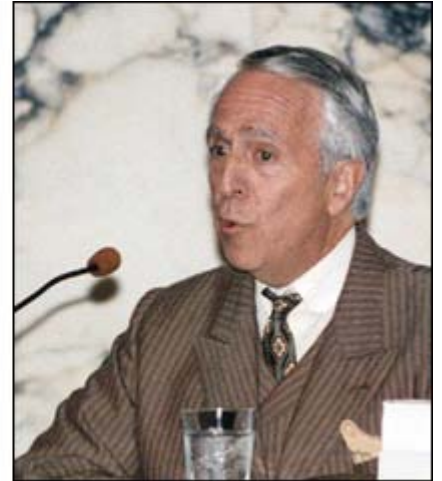
The historic case of U.S. v. Ah Sou was re-enacted in ceremonial Courtroom One

working in the court's staff attorneys office.

Justice O'Connor also presided over the dedication, unveiling a plaque designating Room 329, as the "Historic Supreme Court Circuit Justice Chambers." The plaque was donated by the Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society, whose president, attorney Marc M. Seltzer, introduced the justice. The chambers were included in the courthouse design, but never used as the practice of riding circuit officially ended in 1911.

The re-enactment featured the case of *United States v. Ah Sou*, a Chinese woman sold into slavery who was illegally brought into this country by her master. She escaped and entered into what may have been a sham marriage to avoid being returned to China. The government sought to deport her, but the district court issued a stay, which was appealed. The Court of Appeals reversed with regret apparent in the opinion.

Circuit Judge Pamela Rymer presided over the panel hearing the case, which included Circuit Judges William Fletcher and Michael Daly Hawkins, Senior Circuit Judge Dorothy Nelson, and Chief District Judge Philip Pro of the District of Nevada. Arguing the case were District Judges Charles Breyer of the Northern District of California, on behalf of the government, and Marsha



Judges Marsha Pechman of Seattle and Charles Breyer of San Francisco donned period attire to argue the case



Docents also dressed the part to lead courthouse tours

Pechman of the Western District of Washington on behalf of Ah Sou. Each of the litigators wore period costume borrowed by the wardrobe of the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco.

The re-enactment was videotaped by KQED, the local PBS affiliate for inclusion in a program to air later this year on the 100th anniversary of the building.

The courthouse officially opened on Aug. 29, 1905, after seven years of construction and at a cost of \$2.5 million, the equivalent of about \$50 million today. It was designed by the James Knox Taylor, supervising architect of the Department of the Treasury, and was originally intended to house a post office, courthouse and other federal agencies. The building survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, but was seriously damaged during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. After extensive repairs, including seismic retrofitting, the building reopened for use by the court in 1997.



Senior Circuit Judge James R. Browning is greeted; Circuit Judge Margaret McKeown chaired the program committee



The program concluded with a recital of chamber music by the Quartet of Appeals, whose members included staff attorney Susan Soong